Story by Kyo Shirodaira Art by Eita Mizuno

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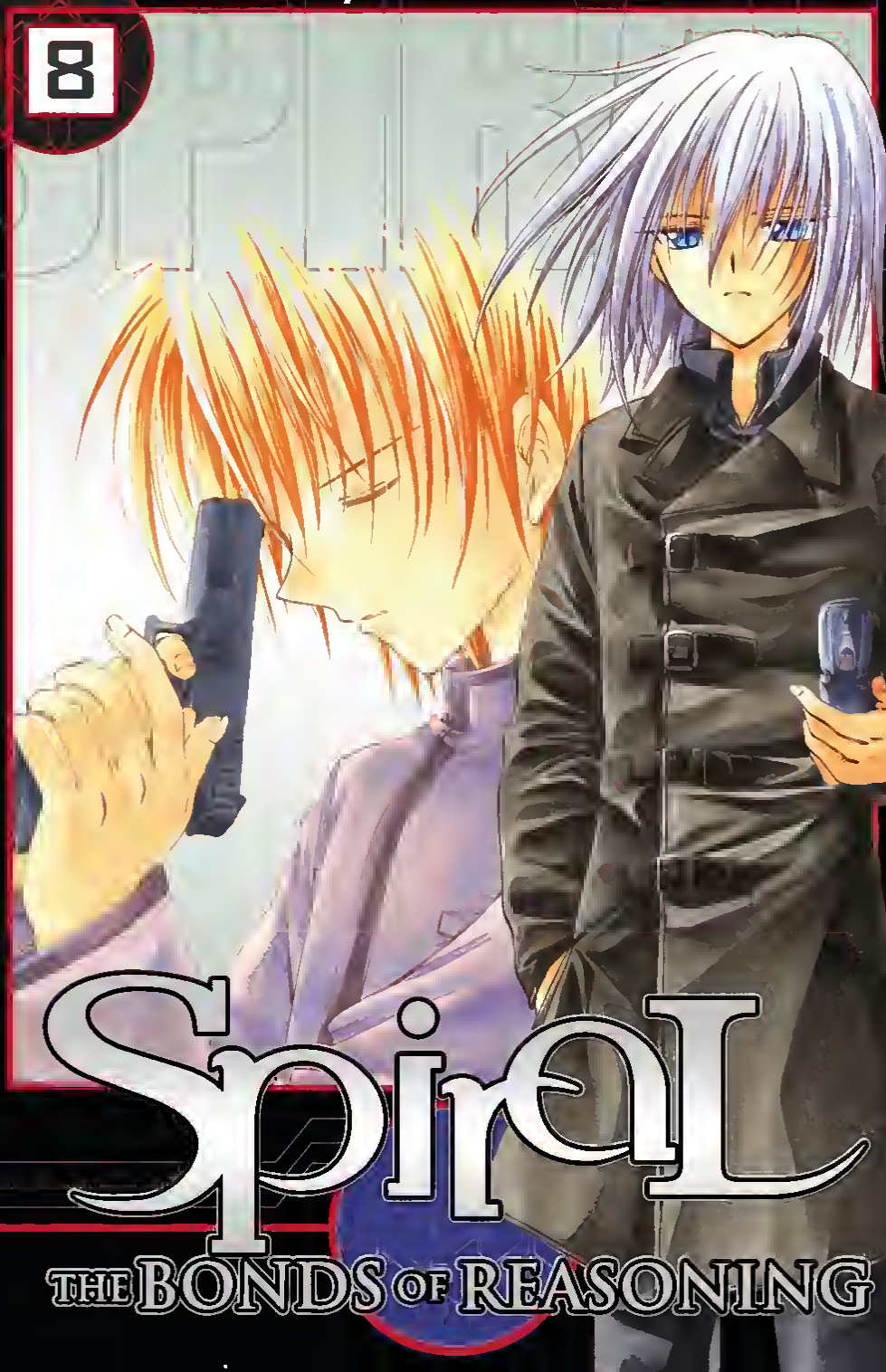

Spiral

THE BONDS OF REASONING

Spiral THE BONDS OF REASONING

8

While the night
Is still young
SPIRAL makes
The world brand new

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN
THE GAME OF RAT AND DRAGON
DA (TAT)
DA
DA
DA

CHAPTER
THIRTY-SEVEN
THE GAME
OF RAT AND
DRAGON
THEY SAY THE SITUATION IS PLAYING OUT JUST AS THEY EXPECTED!

THEY SAY THE SITUATION IS PLAYING OUT JUST AS THEY EXPECTED!

CHAPTER
THIRTY-SEVEN
THE GAME
OF RAT AND
DRAGON

TSUKIOMI HIGH
THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY, "A" WING
DA
DA (TAT)
SA (WHIP)
THAT ASS-HOLE!

FORGET BULLET-PROOF VESTS! THAT THING LOOKS LIKE IT COULD BLAST THROUGH TWO, THREE FIRE DOORS, EASY!
DA
DA
DA
DA
DA
I SORTA SAW THIS COMING, BUT I DIDN'T ANTICIPATE THAT MONSTER OF A GUN HE BROUGHT!
WE CAN'T USE DESKS OR DOORS AS SHIELDS.
AT THIS RATE, IT'LL ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE PUSHES THROUGH TO US.
PASHI (CATCH)
EVEN IF WE MADE OBSTACLES OUT OF THEM, WE'D BE GONERS ONCE HE BLASTED THEM AWAY.

WHAT DO WE DO?
...GET RIGHT UP IN HIS FACE, TAKE OUT HIS GUN ...
...AND COME AT HIM FROM BOTH SIDES IN ONE GO.
SO YOU MEAN ...
GACHA (CLICK)
IT'S RISKY, BUT IT'S ALL WE'VE GOT.
GOSO (RUMMAGE)
...PLAN "B"?
CHA (CLACK)

PIN (PLUCK)
PASHI (CATCH)
AND IT'S WAY SAFER THAN WHAT WE'RE DOING NOW.
DA
DA
DA
DA (TAT)
DA
DA
KOU-SUKE!
YOU KNOW THE FORMATION, RIGHT?
GA (GRAB)
RIGHT ...
...JUST DON'T MESS UP YOUR SHOT.

GARA (RATTLE)
DA (TAT) DA DA DA
TA (TMP)
!
DA

HERE GOES!
OKAY!
HE STOPPED FIRING!!
JAKA (KACHAK)
SA (HIDE)
DA
TAN (DASH)

BYU
(FLING)
BA
(LEAP)
KORORORO
(ROLLS)
KO
(CLACK)
HYU
(WHISTLE)

OH YES!
WELCOME!
BA (WHAP)
TA (DASH)
GUI (YANK)

SO FAR, SO GOOD!!
YOU'RE MINE NOW!
NOW FOR PART TWO...
KANON!

ドーン
DON
ドーン
DON
(BLAM)
ドーン
DON
ドーン
DON
ドーン
DON

RYOUKO!!
DOSA (THUD)
HA (GASP)
SU (DART)
ASA-ZUKI.

THAT'S A BAD HABIT OF YOURS.
GA (GRAB)
YOU WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT YOUR COMRADES...
GUN (PULL)
...SO YOUR REFLEXES ARE SLOW.

ZA
(WHOOSH)
BUN
(SWING)
DAAN
(THUNK)

WHY DON'T YOU COME OUT?
...RIO.
SUTA (STRIDE)
すたすた
SUTA
CHA CLACK!
...THAT'S ENOUGH HIDING.

TE...
TA (TAP)
KARA (RATTLE)
NOT A BAD SCHEME YOU HAD THERE.
AND WITH MY GUN UNDER CONTROL, ASAZUKI WAS READY TO SHOOT ME WITH AN ANESTHETIC BULLET.
BUT KNOWING RYOUKO, THE CHANCES FOR SUCCESS WERE HIGH.
IF THE TIMING HAD BEEN OFF, IT WOULD'VE BEEN FATAL.
YOU FORCED ME OUT OF THE CLASSROOM WITH THAT FAKE GRENADE ...
...SO THEY COULD INTERFERE WITH MY GUN.

THEN, HAVING TAKEN THE VERANDA TO ENTER THE CLASSROOM, YOU'D SECURE ME FROM BEHIND.
SO EVEN IF I HAD AVOIDED ASAZUKI'S FIRST SHOT...
...THE SECOND SHOT FROM BEHIND...
...COUPLED WITH ASAZUKI AND RYOUKO RELOADING AND ATTACKING FROM THE FRONT, WOULD HAVE PUT ME IN A TIGHT SPOT.
YEP.
BUT I...
NIKORI (GRIN)
...HAD THE FORESIGHT TO ANTICIPATE YOUR PLAN AND USE IT FOR MY OWN STRATEGY, YOU SEE.
I THOUGHT THAT BRINGING AN IMPOSING GUN LIKE THIS WOULD GUARANTEE MY VICTORY.
GIRI (GRIT)
IT WAS A GOOD STRATEGY. ♪
THIS IS MY BIG CHANCE TO CRUSH YOU, AFTER ALL.
SU (LIFT)?

THE CHANGE WAS SO FAST, RYOUKO LOST HER BALANCE IN SURPRISE.
GAKU (FALL)
THAT'S HOW I WAS ABLE TO SWITCH TO IT IN A SECOND.
BUT I STILL HID THIS LITTLE GEM AT MY WRIST SO IT COULD FLY INTO MY HAND WITH JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF FORCE.
AFTER THAT, I WAS ABLE TO DELIVER A SERIES OF RAPID SHOTS TO HER CHEST...
IT WAS TOO EASY. I COULD'VE DONE IT WITH MY EYES CLOSED.
I'LL ADMIT THAT THROWING HIM OUT THE WINDOW WAS A RATHER CRUDE WAY TO GO ABOUT IT.
I'D WON THIS MATCH BEFORE YOU EVEN HAD A CHANCE TO BOX ME IN FROM BEHIND.
SEEING RYOUKO GO DOWN, ASAZUKI HESITATED A SECOND TO ASSESS THE SITUATION.

RIO.
TAN! (TAP)
...NOW, THEN.
GOSO (RUMMAGE)
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE LEFT.
DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU COULD BEAT ME IN A GENUINE BATTLE?
THAT YOU COULD ACTUALLY CATCH ME WITHOUT HAVING TO KILL ME?

...YOU LIVE UP TO YOUR NICKNAME, "GUN WITH WINGS."
BUT THE NICKNAME OF YOURS THAT'S GOTTEN AROUND MOST IS...
YOU'VE BEEN CALLED THE "WITCH OF DESTRUCTION" AND "BOMB FAIRY" AMONG OTHER THINGS.
SAME GOES FOR YOU.
.....
HUH?
MAYBE THAT WAS THE ONE KIYOTAKA LIKED TO USE HIMSELF.
THEY DON'T CALL ME THAT!
..."THE LOLITA BOMB."

はあ
HAA (SIGH)
IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME, WOULD YOU HURRY IT UP?
YOU SHOULD ONLY NEED ONE SHOT TO TAKE ME DOWN.
HA HA!
YES, BUT THAT ONE SHOT COULD BE TRICKY.

I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY EXPLOSIVES YOU MIGHT BE HIDING.
IF I'M NOT CAREFUL WITH MY AIM, I COULD SET OFF AN EXPLOSION.
AND I CAN'T LET MYSELF GET CAUGHT UP IN THE BLAST TOO.
FOR YOU I NEED A STRAIGHT SHOT TO THE HEAD.

I DON'T THINK YOU'RE TAKING ME SERIOUSLY ENOUGH.
NI (SMILE)
...KANON-KUN.
CHA (CLACK)
YOU REALLY DON'T THINK I FORESAW THIS SITUATION?
...SEE?
KASHAN (KACLICK)
SU (LIFT)

I'VE PREPARED A SIMILAR TOY.
YOU DIDN'T THINK I'D FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU'D PULL...
...AND WORK OUT A PLAN TO COUNTER-ACT IT?
FOR EXAMPLE ...
...MAYBE I PLANNED THAT THE MOMENT YOU PULLED OUT YOUR GUN...
...RYOUKO-CHAN WOULD SHOOT YOU POINT BLANK WITH A PARALYSIS BULLET USING A GUN HIDDEN UP HER OWN SLEEVE.
WITH THAT AS OUR STARTING MOVE, MAYBE KOUSUKE-KUN AND I WERE GOING TO TRAP YOU AT ONCE FROM THE FRONT AND THE BACK.
I SEE. SO...
...YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME THAT I SHOT RYOUKO TOO QUICKLY, AND THE REST OF YOUR PLAN ENDED UP NOT PLAYING OUT, RIGHT?

HE DID THAT INTENTIONALLY, I'M SURE.
EVEN THOUGH IT SOUNDS LIKE INSTANT DEATH, FROM THE THIRD FLOOR, IT'S NOT SUCH A SURE THING.
AND KOUSUKE-KUN'S A COCKROACH.
THAT'S RIGHT.
AND THAT'S WHY KOUSUKE-KUN HESITATED FOR A MOMENT.
BUT STILL, HE MANAGED TO GET YOU TO THROW HIM OUT THE WINDOW...
...RATHER THAN GIVING YOU THE CHANCE TO TAKE OUT YOUR GUN.
AND ...
HE SECURED THE BEST ROUTE FOR SURVIVAL.

...ALTHOUGH RYOUKO-CHAN'S LYING RIGHT THERE...
...WHAT IF SHE'S ACTUALLY WEARING A BULLET-PROOF VEST LINED WITH BLOOD PACKETS?
WHAT IF SHE'S JUST BIDING HER TIME FOR THE CHANCE TO SHOOT YOU WITH THAT ANESTHETIC BULLET?
IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT IF SHE'S NOT ACTUALLY DEAD?
...KANON-KUN.
YOU MADE TWO MISTAKES.
THE FIRST ...
...IS THAT YOU DIDN'T COMPLETELY GUARANTEE RYOUKO-CHAN'S DEATH BY SHOOTING HER IN THE HEAD WHILE SHE WAS DOWN.

THE SECOND ...
...IS THAT YOU'RE STILL CARRYING THAT BIG GUN.
IF YOU WERE ATTACKED ON BOTH SIDES SIMULTANEOUSLY...
...YOU'D NEVER BE ABLE TO MOVE THAT THING FAST ENOUGH TO SHOOT THE TWO OF US.
THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE ONE OF US WOULD HAVE TIME TO SHOOT YOU.
FU (SIGH)

IF YOU HADN'T TOLD ME, YOU COULD HAVE AT LEAST HAD A CHANCE AT THAT SURPRISE ATTACK.
BUT ISN'T IT ODD THAT YOU'D OFFER THIS INFORMATION SO WILLINGLY?

ALSO, IF RYOUKO HAD REALLY HAD A BULLETPROOF VEST ON, THEN ASAZUKI WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO SHOCKED.

...I'LL ADMIT I MADE A FEW BLUNDERS.

...WITH YOUR REFLEXES, KANON-KUN, A SURPRISE ATTACK WOULDN'T REALLY WORK ON YOU.

IT SOUNDS TO ME LIKE YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO DISTRACT ME.

THEN HOW ABOUT THIS?
WHAT A PATHETIC EXCUSE.
AND I FORGOT TO TELL KOUSUKE ABOUT THE BULLET-PROOF VEST.
IT'LL TAKE SOME TIME FOR HER TO GET BACK ON HER FEET.
...THOSE SIX SHOTS DID ENOUGH DAMAGE TO TAKE HER OUT OF THE PICTURE FOR A WHILE.
EVEN IF RYOUKO-CHAN'S WEARING A BULLET-PROOF VEST...
...WAS ONLY MEANT TO STALL FOR TIME.
SO ALL THIS TALK...

...BUT THAT COULD ALSO...
GU (GRIP)
...BE ANOTHER LIE TO DIVERT YOUR ATTENTION.
SO ...
...WHICH IS IT?

I'LL ADMIT THAT I WAS A LITTLE LAX, BUT...
...AS EXPECTED, RIO...
...WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY MISTAKE TO THE FULLEST EXTENT!!
...I DON'T CARE.

ZAA (WHOOSH)
REGARD-LESS OF WHICH IT IS...
...I'M ENDING THIS NOW...

TA
(TAP)
SARA
(RUSTLE)
KA
(FLASH)
KASHAN
(KACLICK)
BI
(WHIP)
BA
(RAISE)

I'LL SHOW THEM...
...THAT I CAN OVERCOME THIS!!

ZURU (DRAG)
ずる
DARA (DANGLE)
だら
UGH!

HAA (SIGH)
TAN (TMP)
RYOUKO HAD ON A BULLET-PROOF VEST...
...AND RIO SHOULDN'T BE THAT EASY TO TAKE DOWN...
RYOUKO!
RIO!!

KOUSUKE ...
THANK GOD...
YOU'RE STILL ALIVE...
YOU IDIOT! HOW CAN YOU BE WORRIED ABOUT ME!?
YOU GOT KNOCKED OUT WHEN YOU TOOK THOSE SHOTS TO THE CHEST.
YEAH ...
I COULD'VE RETALIATED IF IT HAD BEEN JUST TWO OR THREE SHOTS LIKE I WAS ANTICIPATING.
BUT HE FIRED SIX SHOTS RIGHT AT MY HEART.
IT WAS TOO MUCH TO TAKE.
THAT DAMN KANON.
IT'S NOT FAIR THAT HE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO LOOK AT ME TO NAIL ME DEAD ON.
KOHO (COUGH)
...I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.

I THINK TWO OF THE BULLETS GOT THROUGH...
...SO A COUPLE OF MY RIBS ARE BROKEN.
STILL...
...IT WAS THANKS TO ALL THE PAIN THAT I REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS QUICKLY ENOUGH...
...TO MAKE IT IN TIME FOR RIO'S GAMBLE ON A FINAL ATTACK.
...SO...
...WHAT HAPPENED TO KANON?
WHEN WE ATTACKED, I SOMEHOW MANAGED TO LAND AN ANESTHETIC BULLET IN HIS LEFT ARM.
BUT IN THE END... HE GOT AWAY.

RIO...
PHEW...
AND UNTIL THAT WEARS OFF, HE WON'T ATTACK US.
WE CAN REST FOR A LITTLE WHILE...
HE'LL PROBABLY EXTRACT THE BULLET AS SOON AS HE CAN...
...BUT, AT THE VERY LEAST, IT'LL LEAVE HIM FEELING A LITTLE LIGHT IN THE HEAD.
...ARE YOU OKAY?
...HEH HEH.
ON HIS WAY OUT, HE KNOCKED ME HARD WITH HIS GUN...
I THINK MY RIGHT COLLAR-BONE'S BROKEN.

HOW ABOUT YOU, KOUSUKE-KUN?
YOU FELL ALL THE WAY FROM THE THIRD FLOOR.
MY LEFT ARM'S BROKEN.
MY LEFT LEG'S NOT DOING SO HOT EITHER.
AND ...
...MY WHOLE BODY'S KILLING ME.
...RIO TOLD ME.
SHE SAID YOU PANICKED WHEN YOU SAW ME GET SHOT AND LET YOURSELF GET THROWN. IS THAT TRUE?

YOU KNEW I WAS WEARING A BULLET-PROOF VEST!
AND MY GETTING SHOT WAS WELL WITHIN OUR CALCU-LATIONS!
ARE YOU AN IDIOT!?
YEAH, WELL, NONE OF US THOUGHT YOU'D GET KNOCKED OUT FROM IT.
AND EVEN IF THE BULLET-PROOF VEST WAS ONLY FITTED WITH BLOOD PACKETS...
GEHO (HACK)
GOHO (COUGH)
...IF I'D ACTED UNNATURALLY CALM FOR A SITUATION LIKE THAT, HE'D HAVE BEEN SUSPICIOUS.
THEN HE MIGHT NOT HAVE HESITATED TO FINISH YOU OFF FOR GOOD, OR USE YOU AS A SHIELD.
KOHO (COUGH)
LETTING HIM "KILL" ME MADE HIM LOWER HIS GUARD.

THAT'S WHY OUR FINAL DOUBLE-ATTACK WAS A SUCCESS.

...KOUSUKE-KUN'S RIGHT.

TON (SLAM)
IF YOU'D JUST IGNORED ME, YOU COULD'VE FOCUSED ON THE FIGHT...!

BUT THAT WAS ALL JUST A GAMBLE!

IF I HADN'T WOKEN UP IN TIME, IT WOULD'VE BEEN GAME OVER!

ZURU (SLIDE)
...YOU OCTOPUS ...
I could never just ignore you.
.....

ALL OF US MAY BE ALIVE, BUT WE'RE ALL SERIOUSLY INJURED...
THERE'S NO WAY...
...WE CAN FIGHT IN THE NEXT ROUND.
BUT KANON-KUN STILL HAS A WEAKNESS.
THANKS TO SOME SIMPLE ERRORS ON HIS PART, HE WASN'T ABLE TO COMPLETELY DESTROY US.
NOW THAT I THINK BACK, HE FAILED TO KILL EYES-KUN TOO...
I'M SURE THAT SOMEWHERE IN HIS SUB-CONSCIOUS...
...THERE'S SOME HESITATION ABOUT KILLING HIS OWN KIND...

...THAT'S WHY...
GYU (CLENCH)
THAT'S WHY...
IT'LL BE OKAY...
WE CAN STILL MAKE IT.
ZAA (WSHH)

IT'LL BE OKAY.
ZAA (WSHH)
ZAA
I CAN KILL MY OWN KIND. I KNOW IT...

CHAPTER
THIRTY-EIGHT
A SCANNER
DARKLY

YORO (STAGGER)
I EXTRACTED THE BULLET, BUT...
...THE ANESTHETIC IS STILL HAVING SOME EFFECT...
I FEEL LIGHT-HEADED...
KUSHA (RUFFLE)
IT SHOULD COMPLETELY WEAR OFF IN THIRTY MINUTES OR SO...

I KEEP MAKING MISTAKES I NEVER USUALLY WOULD...
TON (SLAM)
SURE, I HAVEN'T DONE BATTLE IN OVER A YEAR, BUT...
...DOES THIS MEAN I STILL DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES...?
...I'M GOING TO DO THIS.

I'M GOING TO WIPE OUT MY OWN KIND WITH THESE TWO HANDS.
第6音楽室
SIGN: MUSIC ROOM #6
CHA (CLACK)
OH.
WELCOME BACK.

...WHAT'S THE MATTER?
YOU LOOK FLUSTERED ...
OH, YEAH ...?
RIO AND HER TEAM WERE TOUGH.
I HATE TO ADMIT IT, BUT I WAS ONE STEP AWAY FROM BEING KILLED MYSELF.

GATA (CLATTER)
...OR YOU'VE RESIGNED YOURSELF TO YOUR FATE...
...EITHER YOU'VE GOT GUTS...
TOO BAD FOR THEM.
I MEAN, SHOULDN'T YOU BE FIGHTING BACK A LITTLE MORE?
IF I WERE TO KICK AND SCREAM, I'D ONLY HURT MYSELF.
MY SHOULDER'S KILLING ME ENOUGH AS IT IS.

BUT IT'S TIMES LIKE THESE WHEN THE HERO'S SUPPOSED TO UNLEASH HIS FULL POWER AND TRY TO MAKE AN ESCAPE.
LIKE OPENING THE HANDCUFFS USING ONLY A SAFETY PIN...
...OR DISLOCATING HIS ARMS TO WRIGGLE HIMSELF OUT OF THE BINDINGS.
MAYBE EVEN SHOOTING LASERS FROM HIS EYES.
YOU THINK I'D HAVE SOME RANDOM ABILITY LIKE THAT?
AND WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, SHOOTING LASERS FROM MY EYES?
HMM.
YOU REALLY ARE A BORE.
THAT'S BECAUSE I'M JUST A PUPPET BEING MANIPULATED BY MY BROTHER.
JUST LIKE YOU...

SO YOU STILL THINK...
...THAT EVERYBODY'S DANCING IN THE PALM OF KIYOTAKA'S HAND, EH?
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN STARTING A POINTLESS ARGUMENT.
WE'LL ALL KNOW FOR SURE ONCE THIS FESTIVAL'S OVER ANYWAY, RIGHT?

GATA (CLATTER)

EVEN AFTER MY DISRUPTIVE PERFORMANCE, THE POLICE STILL HAVEN'T MADE A MOVE.
I KNEW IT. THE WATCHER'S PUTTING A CHECK ON THEM.
SU (SLIDE)
SEEMS I CAN START NEGOTIATING ...

BURORORORORO
(VRRRROOM)
HM?
...AREN'T YOU GOING TO ASK ME ANYTHING?
.....

I DO WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT ALL THOSE THINGS, BUT...
I WAS SURE YOU'D INTERROGATE ME ALL THE WAY TO THE CAMPUS.
ABOUT KIYOTAKA OR THE BLADE CHILDREN?
...YOU'D BE ABLE TO ANSWER ALL MY QUESTIONS?
...DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT IN THE TIME IT TAKES TO GET TO THE SCHOOL...
EXACTLY.
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'D BE IMPOSSIBLE ...
.....

IF I ONLY GOT HALF OF THE ANSWERS, IT'D MAKE ME MORE STRESSED OUT THAN I NEED.
ONCE EVERYTHING'S SETTLED WITH THIS KANON BOY, I HOPE YOU'LL LET ME ASK ALL MY QUESTIONS, STARTING FROM THE TOP.
...BUT...
...THERE'S ONE THING I'D LIKE YOU TO CLEAR UP FOR ME NOW.
WHAT?
...IS KIYOTAKA-SAN...

...IS "KIYOTAKA NARUMI" IN THE RIGHT?
...NO, I MEAN ...
...IN THE END...
...HE'LL BE STANDING IN THE RIGHT, YES.

BUT THE ROAD THAT LEADS THERE...
...WILL BE LITTERED WITH THE BODIES OF SCAPEGOATS, ALL CRUELLY SACRIFICED.
TO THE MAJORITY OF THOSE UNINVOLVED, WHAT HE'S DOING IS UNDOUBTEDLY CORRECT.
BUT TO THE SACRIFICED, WHO CAN SAY...?
SUCH IS...
...GOD'S IDEA OF WHAT'S RIGHT...

I GUESS IN THE END!..
...I WAS JUST ANOTHER OF HIS SCAPE-GOATS.
...I SEE ...
...PER-HAPS.
THOSE WHO ALLOW THEMSELVES TO THINK THAT WAY...
...WON'T SUFFER MUCH, AT LEAST.

...HEH HEH.
KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD.
OH!
RIGHT!
SORRY ABOUT THAT...
YOU TWO ARE A LOT ALIKE.
MU CHUMPHO
YOU AND AYUMU ...

YOU ARE.
HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED?
.....
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE COLD AND BLUNT AND UNFEELING ...
...THERE'S ALSO A PART OF YOU THAT'S GENTLE.
...MAY I ASK JUST ONE MORE THING?

DOES AYUMU ...
...DOES "KIYOTAKA NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER" HAVE SOME SPECIAL MEANING BEHIND HIM?
THE FACT THAT HE'S INVOLVED IN ALL THIS...
...IS NO SIMPLE COINCIDENCE, RIGHT?
...THAT IS STILL...
...ONLY A POSSI-BILITY.

SINCE THE "LITTLE BROTHER" IS A FALSE GOD...
...HE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO SURPASS BOTH GOD AND THE DEVIL.
YES.
A POSSI-BILITY?
THE POTENTIAL TO SURPASS BOTH GOD AND THE DEVIL...?

IF YOU HAVE ANY DEMANDS, YOU CAN SPEAK WITH THE POLICE OR—
I told you, talking to the police won't do any good.
You've been given orders not to make a move, remember?
BUT ...!
LOOK! I GET THAT YOU'RE WILLING TO TALK, BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS "WATCHER" BUSINESS IS ALL ABOUT!
HYOI CYOINKO
LISTEN, YOU...!
KANON-KUN ♪
WHY HELLO THERE.

YOU ARE NOW SPEAKING TO AN AGENT OF THE WATCHERS.
ぱちくり。
PACHIKURI (STUNNED)
Hello?
Can you hear me?
OH, YES ...
I CAN HEAR YOU LOUD AND CLEAR.

YOU SURE SOUND YOUNG TO BE A WATCHER.
I THOUGHT A MUG-FACED OLD MAN WOULD SHOW UP.
THOSE OLD FARTS LIKE TO WATCH THINGS FROM ABOVE. THEY WOULDN'T COME DOWN FOR A LITTLE SITUATION LIKE THIS.
IT'S MAINLY THE NEWER MEMBERS WHO GO OUT INTO THE FIELD.
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF.
I'M KIRIE TSUCHIYA.
WITH GOOD LOOKS AND BRAINS TO MATCH...
...THINK OF ME AS YOUR 27-YEAR-OLD BIG SISTER.

YOU WANT ALL THE BLADE CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL GATHERED IN ONE SPOT, RIGHT?
WELL, WHERE?
Gym number three.
...IF YOU'RE SO SMART, THEN YOU ALREADY KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO ASK.
WHEN YOU'RE DONE ASSEMBLING THEM, CALL ME, WOULD YOU?
SURE.
Roger that.
BUT IT'LL TAKE AT LEAST TWO HOURS.
THAT OKAY WITH YOU?
OKAY.
...UNTIL THEN...
...CAN YOU MAKE SURE YOU STAY SAFE?
OH.
BUT...

I'VE IMMOBILIZED AYUMU NARUMI-KUN.
AND RIO AND COMPANY ARE SERIOUSLY INJURED.
THERE'S NOTHING THAT CAN TAKE ME DOWN NOW.
FU (HEH)
VERY WELL.
JUST AS THE FATE WOVEN BY GOD AND THE DEVIL DICTATES...
IN ANY CASE, WE'RE JUST WATCHING...
...ONLY FOLLOWING THE RULES.

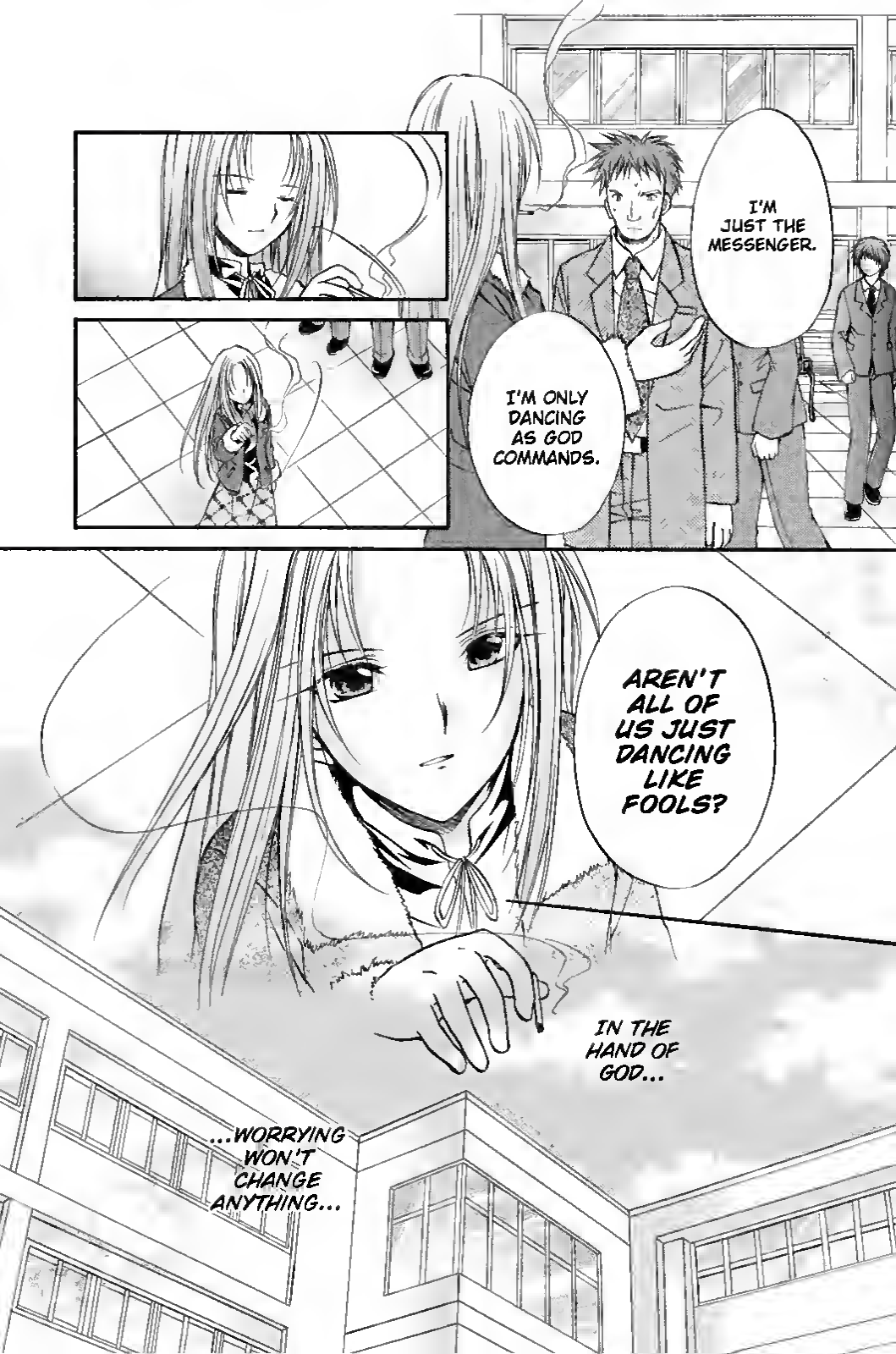
I WANT TO TALK TO EYES RUTHERFORD.
...ACTUALLY, I HAVE ANOTHER REQUEST.
YES, WHAT IS IT?

NIYARI (SMIRK)
Even over the phone will do. Just get ahold of him for me.
...PIECE OF CAKE ...
GATA (CLATTER)
Ruth-kun's already on his way here.
AND I WASN'T EVEN INVOLVED WITH IT.
HE DECIDED TO BRIBE KIYOTAKA-SAN'S WOMAN INTO DRIVING HIM HERE.
Shocking, right?

Well.
See you.
PU (CLICK)
NOT EVERY-THING'S GOING TO GO THE WAY YOU PLANNED.
TSUU (DOO)
TSUU
.....
LOOKS LIKE HIS CALCULA-TIONS HAVE GONE AWRY...
WELL, WELL ...

DIDN'T YOU RECEIVE ORDERS FROM ABOVE?
UGH. NO QUESTIONS, PLEASE.
AND WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT "WATCHERS" ...!?
POI (TOSS)
AND JUST WHO THE HELL ARE YOU!?
ZAWA
ZAWA (CHATTER)
EVEN IF I DID EXPLAIN, YOU STILL WOULDN'T GET IT.
RURURURURU (CRRRRING) RURURURURU
PO (BEEP)
PO
PO
PU (CLICK)
HELLO? IT'S ME, KIRIE.

THE SITUATION'S PLAYING OUT ALMOST COMPLETELY ACCORDING TO KIYOTAKA'S PLAN.
GOD DOESN'T MAKE MISTAKES, AS EXPECTED.
...UH-HUH.
...UH-HUH.
OKAY, THANKS, THEN.
DON'T GLARE AT ME.
...THAT'S RIGHT.
HE ASKED ME TO GATHER THE CHILDREN.
THOUGH THIS SHOULD ALL BE SETTLED BY THEN ANYHOW ...
...I'LL GO ALONG JUST TO BE SURE.


I'M JUST THE MESSENGER.
I'M ONLY DANCING AS GOD COMMANDS.
AREN'T ALL OF US JUST DANCING LIKE FOOLS?
IN THE HAND OF GOD...
...WORRYING WON'T CHANGE ANYTHING...

HEY, RIO...
YOU SURE YOU DON'T HAVE ANY PAIN-KILLERS?
DON'T BE SO DEMAND-ING!
I DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO GET MEDICINE READY...
UU (UGH)
ZUKI (THROB)
ZUKI...

ANYWAY, HOW LONG ARE WE GONNA SIT HERE?

IT WAS OUR FAULT FOR LEAVING IT TO RIO. SHE SPECIALIZES IN DESTRUCTION, NOT AID.
UHK!
.....

SHOULDN'T WE ATTACK KANON WHILE HE'S STILL UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE ANESTHETIC?
...FOR NOW, WE REST.
IN OUR CURRENT CONDITION, WE COULDN'T WIN AGAINST KANON-KUN EVEN IF HE'S DRUGGED.

KOTE (FLOP)
SO WE CAN REST WITHOUT WORRY.
DOSA (THUMP)
KNOWING KANON-KUN, HE'S PROBABLY GOING TO PLAY IT SAFE AND WAIT FOR THE EFFECTS TO WEAR OFF.
GOOD POINT.
YEAH, WELL THERE'S EVEN LESS OF A CHANCE OF WINNING AGAINST KANON WHEN HE'S NOT UNDER ANY INFLUENCE!!
WE ALL HAVE BROKEN BONES... WHAT KIND OF ADVANTAGE COULD WE POSSIBLY HAVE?
HAUUH...
NO MATTER HOW KANON'S DOING...
...REGULAR METHODS WON'T BE ENOUGH TO BEAT HIM.
RIO'S ALREADY THOUGHT UP A PRACTICAL AND EFFECTIVE PLAN OF ACTION.
.....

NITA (GRIN)
NITA
?
MUKURI (RISE)
MUKURI
THAT REMINDS ME...
SFX: GOSO (RUMMAGE) GOSO
BEHOLD! OUR SECRET WEAPONS!
DON (BAM)
A HEADBAND WITH CAT EARS AND PAW GLOVES!!
KANON-KUN LOVES CATS, SO IF WE MAKE OURSELVES LOOK LIKE CATS, IT'LL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO SHOOT US!!
GU (GRIP)
WHEN SOMEBODY PUTS THESE ON, THEY TRANSFORM INTO A CAT!!

BIKU (FLINCH)
ビクッ
HAUH!
YOU DIDN'T EVEN PREPARE US MEDICINE! DON'T GO PREPARING RIDICULOUS JUNK!!!
IT'S THE PERFECT DEFENSE—
BUT IT'S WORTH A SHOT—
AS IF!
BESIDES, IF WE HAD THESE GLOVES ON, WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HOLD OUR GUNS!!
DON'T GET ANGRY ...
IT WAS JUST A JOKE TO LIGHTEN THE MOOD.
WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO TO LIGHTEN THE MOOD AT A TIME LIKE THIS!?
BESHI (SLAP)
WHOA!
I SWEAR!
THAT DOES IT!!
SUKKU (RISE)

I'M GOING TO THE BATHROOM!
SHE'S AS ROUGH WITH YOU AS EVER.
I CAN'T EVEN PICTURE THAT...
UWAH!
YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT, BUT BACK IN THE DAY SHE USED TO CALL ME "BIG BROTHER" AND HANG ALL OVER ME.
BUT ALL THAT "BIG BROTHER" TALK BROUGHT ME DOWN, SO I TOLD HER TO QUIT IT.

BUT RYOUKO-CHAN IS YOUR LITTLE SISTER.
DON'T.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO SAY THAT, THEN YOU'RE MY LITTLE SISTER TOO.
.....
...I HATE THESE BLOOD TIES.
...I SWEAR ...
...HEY.

WHAT ABOUT THE SITUATION AT HAND?
WE TOOK UP ARMS...
...AND MADE A MESS OF OUR-SELVES ...
WILL ANYTHING CHANGE THIS WAY?
IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN REALLY CHANGE?

IN THE END...
...AREN'T WE JUST KIYOTAKA'S PUPPETS?

...
SORRY.
KUSHA (RUFFLE)
.....

I GUESS I'M JUST TIRED...
THAT WAS STUPID OF ME TO ASK.

ZAAAAA (WSHHH)
KOUSUKE! THAT IDIOT!
HIM AND HIS LOLITA FETISH!

HE'S ALWAYS SIDING WITH RIO!
BASHA (SPLASH)
BASHA
WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT THAT LOLITA BOMB ANYWAY!?
I'M WAY BETTER LOOKING!
AND WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER LONGEST!
I KNOW KOUSUKE BEST OF ALL...!
HA (GASP)
...WHAT AM I, AN IDIOT...?
WHY AM I VENTING AT A TIME LIKE THIS?

BA (WHAP)
HYAAH!
LOOKS LIKE QUITE A FIGHT WENT DOWN HERE!
WAH!
PLEASE DON'T SHOOT!!
IT'S ME!!
SEE!?

.....
IT'S YOU.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?
THAT DOESN'T MATTER.
CHA (CLACK)
GUI (YANK)
I'VE GATHERED ALL THE MEDICAL SUPPLIES YOU NEED.
OKAY?
NOW HURRY.
PLEASE TAKE ME TO EVERYBODY ELSE.
YOU...
WAIT ...!

YOU'RE NOT EVEN INVOLVED. WHY'RE YOU STICKING YOUR NECK OUT LIKE THIS?
THIS IS THE BLADE CHILDREN'S PROBLEM.
BUT THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING...
...WE'LL ALL END UP DANCING AT GOD'S COMMAND.
STILL...
KURU (TWIRL)
...IT'S NOT OVER YET.

I have some good information for all of you.

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

CHAPTER
THIRTY-NINE
FRATRES
(BROTHERS)

RIGHT NOW, NARUMI-SAN IS BEING HELD IN MUSIC ROOM NUMBER SIX ON THE FIFTH FLOOR OF WING "C."
CHANCES ARE HIGH THAT KANON-SAN IS THERE NOW TOO...
...HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
... LITTLE LADY...

!?
FU FU FU...
I FIGURED THIS WOULD HAPPEN, SO I PUT A TRACKING DEVICE ON NARUMI-SAN...
I MEAN!
GOHO (COUGH)
GOHON
ごほ
ごほん
CALL IT THE SIXTH SENSE OF A GIRL IN LOVE.
A- ANYWAY ...

...KNOWING WHERE KANON-KUN AND THE LITTLE BROTHER ARE GIVES US THE UPPER HAND.
YES...
ALSO, A WOMAN WHO SAYS SHE REPRESENTS THE "WATCHERS" SHOWED UP OUT FRONT AND JUST MADE SOME KIND OF DEAL WITH KANON-SAN.
THAT'S WHEN I OVERHEARD ...
...THAT NARUMI-SAN'S SISTER-IN-LAW AND RUTHERFORD-SAN ARE ON THEIR WAY HERE NOW.
THEY SHOULD BE ARRIVING IN TWENTY OR THIRTY MINUTES...
DID YOU SAY RUTHER-FORD!?
AND HE'S WITH NARUMI JUNIOR'S SISTER!?

BOX: FIRST AID
PATAN (SHUT)
IT'S UP TO YOU HOW YOU WANT TO USE THIS INFORMATION, BUT...
THAT WATCHER LADY MENTIONED HIS NAME!
BUT... IT STILL SEEMS TO BE GOING ACCORDING TO THE PLAN OF A CERTAIN KIYOTAKA NARUMI.
THE SITUATION IS EVOLVING.
...PLEASE GO ABOUT IT AS BEST AS YOU CAN, OKAY?

I'D RATHER NOT GET CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE DURING SOME WILD SHOOT-OUT.
AND WITH THAT ...
...I'LL BE GOING.
...P-
PLEASE WAIT!!

...
WHY...
...ARE YOU HERE?
THIS FIGHT IS TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE OVER OUR NIGHTMARISH FUTURE...
OPEN YOUR EYES, BECAUSE IF YOU JUST STICK YOUR NECK IN FOR FUN...
...YOU COULD SERIOUSLY LOSE YOUR LIFE NEXT TIME AROUND.

ANGRY AT THE PERSON MAKING EVERY-BODY DANCE BECAUSE HE THINKS HE'S GOD.
...I'M JUST A LITTLE ANGRY.
SO EVEN THOUGH I'M NOT INVOLVED AND AM PARTLY DOING THIS FOR FUN...
...I FIGURED I'D MESS WITH HIS PLANS A LITTLE.

...IF YOU'RE BEING MANIPULATED BY SOME-ONE...
...FIGHTING WON'T GET YOU ANYWHERE.
NIKO (SMILE)

NOW WE KNOW WHERE KANON IS!
THIS IS OUR CHANCE FOR A SURPRISE ATTACK!
NO.
THIS IS NO TIME TO BE TAKING IT EASY!
THAT'S RIGHT, RIO!
は…
HA (GASP)

IT'S NOT TIME FOR US TO MAKE OUR MOVE YET...
BUT WHILE YOU SAY THAT, KANON'S GETTING HIS ENERGY BACK!
ISN'T OUR BEST CHANCE FOR VICTORY NOW, WHILE HE'S SLIGHTLY WEAKENED!?
NO, IT'S NOT...
IF WE WANT TO WIN...
...IT HAS TO BE WHEN KANON CAN FIGHT US WITH A CLEAR MIND...
IF WE WANT TO WIN...
...IT HAS TO BE WHEN KANON-KUN CAN THINK BEFORE HE MOVES.
EXACTLY.

SO FOR NOW ...
...WE REST OUR BODIES AND WAIT.

ZAWA (CHATTER)
DOYO (CROWD)
HE SHOULD BE HERE ANY MINUTE!
IT'S 4:40.
SUKU (RISE)
ZAWA
ZAWA
SO YOU CAME.

RUTH-KUN.
...KIRIE TSUCHIYA ...?
IF YOU'RE HERE...
...THEN IT SEEMS THINGS ARE GOING ACCORDING TO KIYOTAKA'S PLAN...
THAT'S RIGHT.
THIS WHOLE SCENARIO WAS WRITTEN BY GOD, AFTER ALL.

KANON-KUN WANTS TO SPEAK WITH YOU.
SU (SLIDE)
PLEASE CALL HIM BACK.
KURURI (TURN)

NI (SMILE)
MY SUB-ORDINATES FILLED ME IN ON THE SITUATION.
JUST WHO ARE YOU?
JUST ONE OF KIYOTAKA NARUMI'S MANY PAWNS.
NOTHING MORE. NOTHING LESS.

KIND OF LIKE YOU...
(FUU) (EXHALE)
BO (FWOO)
RURURURURU
RURURURURU
RURURURURU
RURURURURU
RURURURURU (CRRRRING) RURURURURU

DON'T OPEN THE WINDOW.
IF WE DON'T LET THE AIR CIRCULATE, IT'LL GET STUFFY IN HERE.
IT'S CHILLY.
SFX: PIRORORORORO (RRRRRRING)
PIRORORORORO
PATAN (SHUT)
PI (BEEP)

HELLO.
WHO IS IT?
THE GUY YOU FAILED TO KILL OFF.
...THAT YOU, EYES?
CONGRATS ON MAKING THE TRIP, AND JUST AFTER WAKING UP FROM THAT COMA TOO.
NOT TO JUMP STRAIGHT TO BUSINESS, BUT I NEED SOME ADVICE.
LET'S HEAR WHAT IT IS FIRST.
Can you help me?

AS YOU CAN SEE, I'M COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY THE COPS.
EVEN IF I SUCCESSFULLY KILL ALL THE BLADE CHILDREN AT THIS SCHOOL ...
... it'll be pretty tough for me to get away.
I NEED YOUR HELP TO ESCAPE.
If you help me out now...
... you won't have as much trouble later.

SO YOU'RE ASKING ME...
...TO JOIN HANDS WITH YOU AGAIN?
Yep.
YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE ME GETTING ARRESTED BY THE COPS, RIGHT?
IF THERE'S ANY CHANCE, I...
...I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO KILL YOU AGAIN.
...NO...
EVEN IF I WERE TOLD TO KILL YOU AGAIN...
...I COULD NEVER DO IT AND KEEP MY SANITY...

...AND MADE HIMSELF A HOSTAGE WAS TO GET RUTHERFORD TO HELP HIM OUT, EH...?
THE REASON HE PULLED THIS STUNT...
BUT YOU PROBABLY ALREADY KNEW THAT...
I WONDER IF THAT'S REALLY ALL THAT'S GOING ON BETWEEN THOSE TWO...
...HAVEN'T YOU HAD ENOUGH...?

There's no hope for the Blade Children.
NOW LET'S WALK SIDE-BY-SIDE LIKE THE OLD DAYS.
YOU'VE WORKED HARD.
.....
I FINALLY UNDERSTAND WHY YOU LEFT US...
...to completely erase the one hope we do have, remember?
And there's a plot...

KANON
...
...YOU'VE MET "HIZUMI," HAVEN'T YOU?
...YEAH.
I MET HIM.

EVEN THOUGH YOU KNEW ABOUT HIM FOR A LONG TIME, YOU HID HIM FROM US.
I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU DIDN'T WANT TO TELL US HOW LITTLE HOPE WE HAVE...
...BUT IT WAS STILL CRUEL.
CONTINUING TO LET EVERYONE BELIEVE IN THE BLESSINGS OF A GOD THAT DOESN'T EVEN EXIST...
...IS BEYOND STUPID. IT'S A DOWNRIGHT SIN...

I'LL KEEP SAYING IT.
YOU'LL NEVER BE BLESSED.
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
YOU SURE SOUND CONVINCED.
...YOU DON'T THINK ...
...WE CAN BE BLESSED?
I'VE ALSO ACCEPTED OUR DESOLATE REALITY.
I KNOW.
Quit fooling yourself.
...EVEN SO...
...BUT...

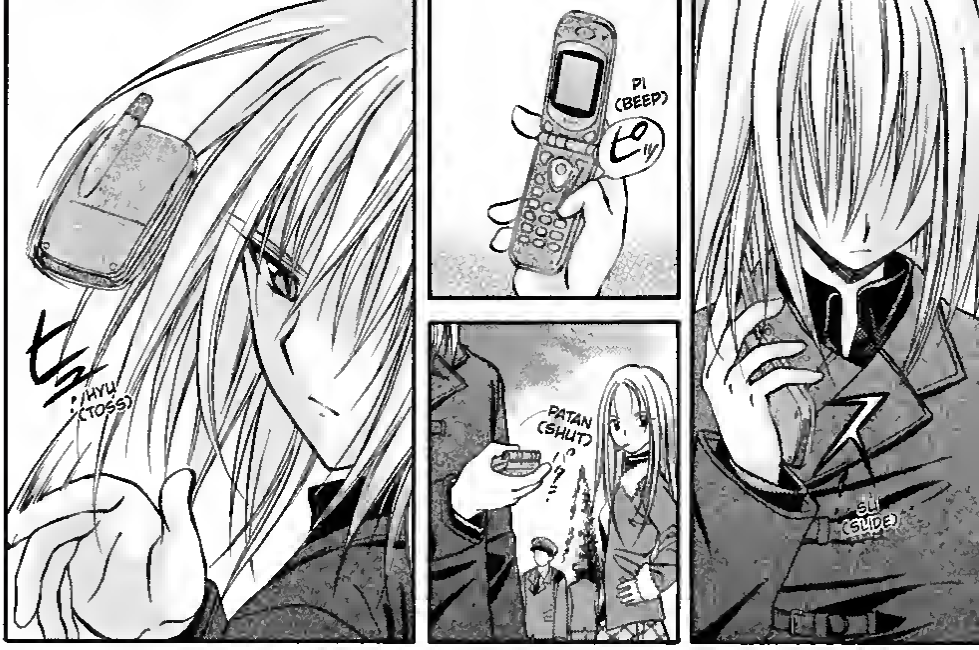
...I'll keep hoping.
No matter how much I doubt...
...I'll keep hoping to the very end, amidst all this loneliness, for God's blessing.
.....
GIRL (SCRIPT)
TA (CRIP)

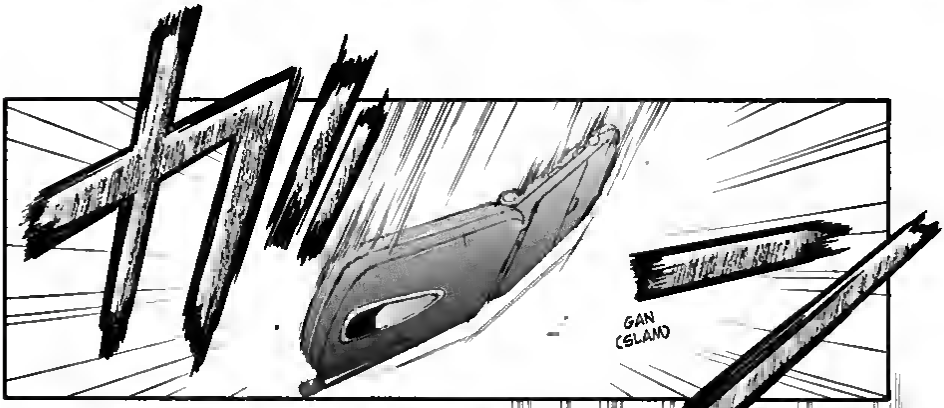
No matter how much I doubt…
…I'll keep hoping.
TA (DRIP)

……
GIRI
GIRI
…I'll keep hoping to the very end, amidst all this loneliness, for God's blessing.

...THIS CONVER-SATION IS OVER.
ALL WE HAVE LEFT IS TO BATTLE.
...I WISH YOU ALL THE BEST.

BROTHER.


HYU (TOSS)
PI (BEEP)
PATAN (SHUT)
SLI (SLIDE)


GAN (SLAM)

CHA (CLACK)
……!!

DAN
(BLAM)
DAN
DAN
DAN
DAN
DAN

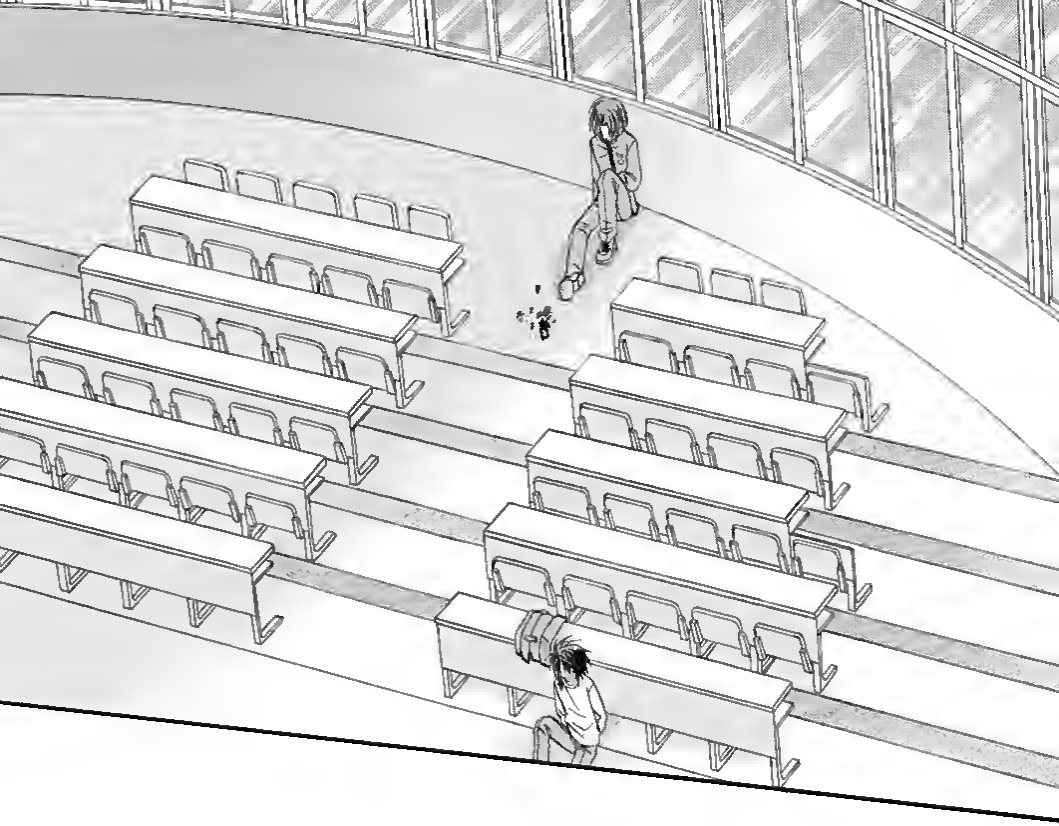
SU (SLIDE)
HOW CAN HE HOPE FOR A BLESS-ING...!?
HOW ...!?
HE KNOWS IT'LL NEVER COME TRUE!
SO WHY DOES EYES STILL ...!?
...BECAUSE YOU AND THE OTHERS...

...ARE THAT IMPORTANT TO HIM. DON'T YOU SEE?

YOU'RE PRECIOUS TO HIM, SO...
...EVEN IF HE KNOWS THAT ONE DAY YOU'LL BE TAKEN AWAY...
...AND BROKEN...
...HE WANTS TO PROTECT ALL OF YOU TILL THAT DAY COMES.
SO FOR EVERY SECOND UNTIL THEN...
...FOR HIS TEAM-MATES...
...HE'LL KEEP ON HOPING...
...SO HE WON'T BE CRUSHED BY DESPAIR.

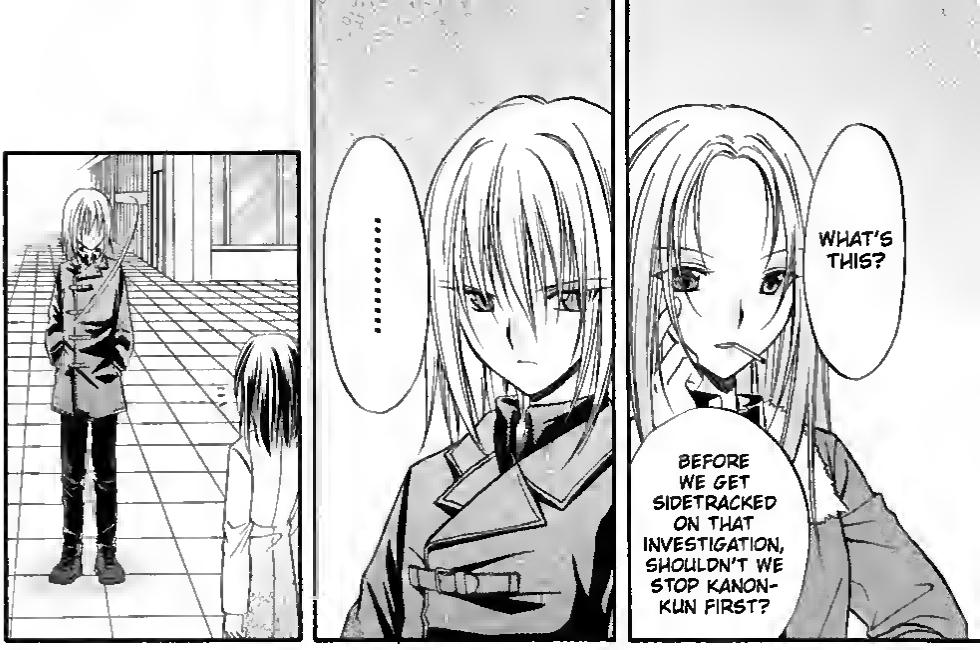
...YOUR FRIENDS ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU TOO, RIGHT?
THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS...
...WHEN YOU KNEW THEY'D BE STOLEN AND BROKEN ...
...YOU FIGURED YOU'D SETTLE THE MATTER YOURSELF IN ONE CLEAN BLOW.
I'M NOT SAYING YOU'RE WRONG...
YOUR DECISION IS BRAVE AND MANLY.
WHILE RUTHERFORD'S IS SO UNMANLY AND HARD TO WATCH.
YOUR WAY'S MORE LIKE THE SAMURAI. I ADMIRE IT.
...BUT AS FOR ME...

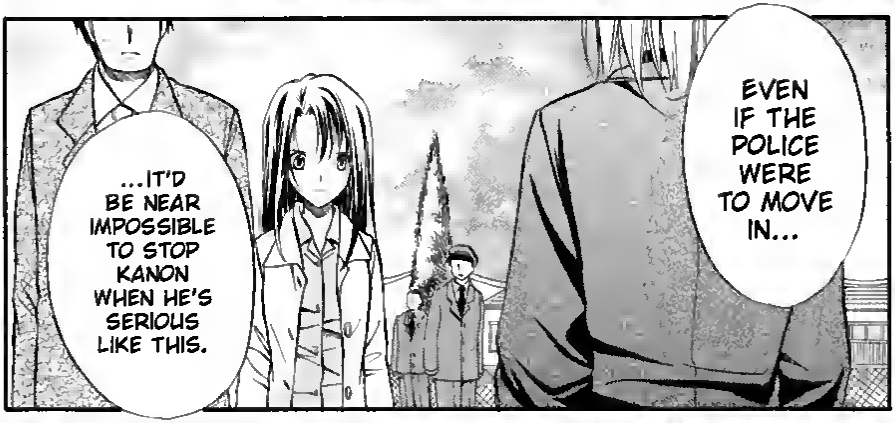
...EVEN THOUGH I ALWAYS GIVE UP WHEN IT COMES TO MYSELF...
...I'VE NEVER GIVEN UP ON ANOTHER'S HAPPINESS.
EVEN WHEN I KNOW THAT THEY WILL NEVER BE MINE...
...THE HAPPINESS OF THE PERSON I CARE ABOUT...
...IS SOMETHING I KEEP HOPING FOR, NO MATTER HOW PATHETIC IT SEEMS.

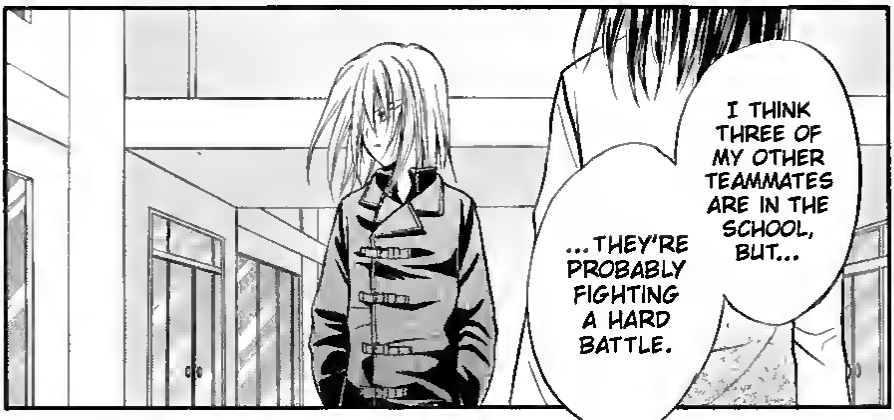


...ISN'T THAT RIGHT ...!?
IN OTHER WORDS, KIYOTAKA WROTE THE SCENARIO SO THAT WOULD HAPPEN.

...MET WITH KANON.
HIZUMI, WHOM KIYOTAKA WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE KEPT HIDDEN...


WHAT'S THIS?
BEFORE WE GET SIDETRACKED ON THAT INVESTIGATION, SHOULDN'T WE STOP KANON-KUN FIRST?
.....


EVEN IF THE POLICE WERE TO MOVE IN...
...IT'D BE NEAR IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP KANON WHEN HE'S SERIOUS LIKE THIS.


I THINK THREE OF MY OTHER TEAMMATES ARE IN THE SCHOOL, BUT...
...THEY'RE PROBABLY FIGHTING A HARD BATTLE.

THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON WHO CAN STOP KANON NOW.
...AYUMU.
YOU MEAN KIYOTAKA NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER?
YES.
AND THE ONE WHO CAN GIVE THAT WEAK AYUMU-KUN...
...THE WILL TO FACE THE INVINCIBLE KANON-KUN AND INSPIRE DETERMINATION IN HIM IS YOU.
MADOKA NARUMI.

IT LOOKS LIKE THAT'S WHY KIYOTAKA NARUMI ARRANGED FOR YOU TO BE HERE.
.....
MADOKA NARUMI.
... WHAT WILL YOU DO?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
DO YOU EXPECT ME TO JUST WALTZ IN THERE, FIND AYUMU...
...AND TELL HIM TO FIGHT?
YES...
NO MATTER WHAT KIYOTAKA IS PLANNING, THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT YOU'RE OUR TRUMP CARD.

ASIDE: UWAH! AYUMU-KUN, YOU HAVE MY SYMPATHY...

...WHAT'S IT MATTER ANYWAY ...?
I WAS PLANNING ON GOING IN FROM THE START.
?
IT'LL BE FINE IF I'M NOT A COP, RIGHT?
I'LL SEND IN MY LETTER OF RESIGNATION LATER.
I DON'T CARE IF I'M DISCHARGED.
B-
BUT, LIEUTEN-ANT!
THE POLICE FORCE RECEIVED ORDERS NOT TO INTERFERE ...
BESHI
!?

NO MATTER WHAT HIS PLAN, IF IT'S KIYOTAKA-SAN'S WISH, THEN THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.
ON TOP OF THAT, I ALREADY OWE A LOT TO AYUMU...!
I'M GOING TO SAVE HIM NOW...!
...AND REPAY MY DEBT.
...I'M SURE YOU THOUGHT THINGS THROUGH BEFORE YOU MADE YOUR MOVE, RUTH-KUN, BUT...
...NOT ONE STEP HAS DEVIATED FROM KIYOTAKA'S PLAN.
AND IT'S A HARD ENDING THAT LIES AHEAD.

IN SPITE OF THAT, WILL YOU STILL KEEP HOPING?
...IN THE FACE OF OUR DESTINY ...
...WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

CHAPTER FORTY
THE CHOICE OF LIFE

...YOU MUST BE WORN OUT BY NOW.
...AND END THIS FESTIVAL, WHY DON'T YOU?
JUST GIVE UP...
...END IT? AND THEN WHAT?
YOU GOING TO TELL ME TO KILL MYSELF OR SOMETHING?

RUNNING AWAY FROM THE PAIN OF DESPAIR ...
...I ONLY ENDED UP FINDING MY GRAVE...
IT WOULD BE EASY TO KILL MYSELF...
...BUT AT THE VERY LEAST ...
...I SEE.
THAT MIGHT BE MY ONLY CHOICE...
...I WANTED TO DIE A MEANINGFUL DEATH.

THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO DESTROY ALL THOSE VILE BLADE CHILDREN.
I FIGURED I'D ATONE FOR THEIR SINS AND DO MYSELF IN.
I THOUGHT THAT WAS THE ONLY MEANING I HAD LEFT.
BUT IF I KILL MY TEAM-MATES NOW...
...IF I KILL ALL THOSE CHILDREN, I'LL ONLY LOSE MY MIND.
I'LL LOSE THE SENSE TO KILL MYSELF...
...AND BE REDUCED TO A KILLING MONSTER.
I'LL EXPOSE THE ONE SIDE OF MYSELF I NEVER WANTED THE WORLD TO SEE.
EVEN THOUGH I NEVER WANTED THAT TO HAPPEN...
...IT SEEMS I'VE BEEN FORCED INTO THIS SITUATION...

THIS REALLY IS THE END.
THIS ISN'T MY PLAN ANYMORE...
THAT CAN'T BE ENOUGH FOR YOU TO LOSE YOUR MIND.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE PLANNING TO KILL YOUR TEAMMATES ALL ALONG.
...DON'T YOU THINK IT'S A LITTLE LATE FOR REGRETS?
...EVEN THOUGH I WAS SUPPOSED TO KILL HIM, HE'S STILL ALIVE.
EYES IS ALIVE.

BUT TO KILL MY BROTHER ...
...NOW I'LL HAVE TO KILL EYES AGAIN.
...TO KILL MY BEST FRIEND AGAIN AND STILL RETAIN MY SANITY...
...IS SOMETHING I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO DO...
AND I DON'T WANT TO BE...
...THE KIND OF DISTURBED PERSON WHO COULD STAY SANE AFTER THAT.

...THE MOMENT I COULDN'T KILL EYES...
...I WAS DRIVEN INTO A CORNER.
THIS GUY'S LOST HIS TEAMMATES, HIS BEST FRIEND...
...AND HIS FAITH.
IN ORDER TO KEEP FROM GOING MAD...
...MAYBE HIS ONLY OPTION REALLY IS TO KILL HIMSELF WITHOUT HOPE OR MEANING.
AT THIS RATE, HE WON'T HESITATE TO DO IT...
...BUT WAS IT SOLELY FOR THAT PURPOSE...
...THAT MY BROTHER MADE HIM DANCE THIS FAR...?

IS THERE NOTHING ELSE I CAN...
IS DYING ALONE MY ONLY CHOICE?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
...WANTS ME TO—!?
WAIT. COULD IT BE THAT KIYOTAKA ...
MADOKA NARUMI WENT INSIDE...

ARE YOU SURE YOU SHOULD STAY OUT HERE, RUTH-KUN?
.....
IF I MET KANON NOW...
...WE'D MOST CERTAINLY END UP DESTROYING EACH OTHER.
IF I DIED, KANON WOULD GO CRAZY AND BECOME A KILLING MONSTER.
AND IF KANON DIED...
...I'D LOSE MY MIND...
...BUT...
...CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT...

...EITHER WAY, KIYOTAKA'S SCENARIO ...
...CALLS FOR KANON-KUN'S DEATH.
...NO...
AND I DON'T MEAN SUICIDE.
...I SUPPOSE IN A WAY IT'D BE SUICIDE.
BUT NOT JUST ANY POINTLESS SUICIDE.

BECAUSE IT'D MAKE AYUMU-KUN STRONGER ...
...AND ALLOW HIM TO GROW ENOUGH TO TAKE ON HIZUMI.
DAN (BLAM)
KIYO-TAKA!!
SO THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT!!?

...HAVE YOU EVER KILLED SOMEBODY?
AYUMU-KUN...
THERE'S NO WAY A NORMAL HIGH SCHOOLER WOULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
...THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE ASKING ME.
.....
SO THAT YOU COULD EVENTUALLY TAKE ON HIZUMI...
THAT'S WHY KIYOTAKA'S BEEN MAKING ME DANCE...
... YOU'RE RIGHT.

MAKING YOU KILL ME.
THAT'S PART OF KIYOTAKA'S SCENARIO.
AND WHAT IS THAT?
I FINALLY FIGURED OUT KIYOTAKA'S PLAN.
.....

AYUMU-KUN'S A GOOD PERSON.
HE'S REALLY NICE, BUT...
...HE LACKS A FIGHTING SPIRIT UNLIKE ANYONE I'VE EVER SEEN.
HE'LL RUN AWAY FROM A FIGHT...
...AND EVEN IF HE WAS FORCED TO DUEL SOMEBODY, RATHER THAN CRUSH THEM...
...HE'D HAPPILY FORGIVE THEM.
BUT THAT'S NOT GONNA WORK IN A BATTLE WITH HIZUMI.

FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORLD
...AYUMU-KUN MUST KILL HIZUMI.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH HIZUMI BEGS FOR HIS LIFE, AYUMU-KUN MUST KILL HIM...
THAT'S WHY AYUMU-KUN NEEDS THE STRENGTH TO KILL, EVEN IF IT'S SOMEONE WHO'S NOT PUTTING UP A FIGHT.
THAT WAY HE WON'T HESITATE OR GET SCARED AT THE SHOWDOWN WITH HIZUMI.
THE ONLY WAY TO GUARANTEE THAT HE'LL HAVE THAT KIND OF STRENGTH ...
...IS FOR HIM TO KILL SOMEBODY.
THAT'S WHAT KIYOTAKA'S WRITTEN OUT FOR US.
...A PERSON WHO CAN KILL OTHERS ...
...IS SAD, BUT STRONG ...
IN A WAY, THEY HAVE A STRENGTH THAT CAN NEVER BE TAKEN BACK.

I FEEL BAD FOR HIM, BUT...
AFTER ALL, THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN KILL HIZUMI IS AYUMU-KUN...
IN OTHER WORDS, KANON IS...
...WE NEED AYUMU-KUN TO BECOME LIKE THAT.
.....
...ONLY A STEPPING STONE TO PREPARE HIM FOR KILLING HIZUMI.
...ISN'T THAT A LITTLE LATE TO MENTION ...?
KIYOTAKA SEES EVERYONE ...
...MERELY AS TOOLS TO HELP AYUMU-KUN MATURE.
WH—

...I CAN'T KILL YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING I DO, ALL TIED UP LIKE THIS?
BESIDES ...
...EVEN IF I WERE FREE, I COULD NEVER BEAT YOU.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT...
I'VE BEEN DRIVEN INTO A CORNER.
IF YOU GET FREE, I WON'T RESIST YOU KILLING ME.
...IT'S IRONIC, BUT...
...THAT'S MY ONLY SALVATION AT THIS POINT...

...IT'S MY ONLY WAY OUT.
TO NOT GO CRAZY ...
...AND TO HAVE A MEANINGFUL DEATH...
YOU'RE NOT MAKING ANY SENSE!
THERE'S NO ROOM FOR CHOICES NOW.
THE STAGE HAS BEEN SET DOWN TO THE VERY LAST PROP.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEE THE POINT IN IT...
SOONER OR LATER YOU WILL, WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT...
...I'M JUST GONNA SAY "SURE, LET'S DO THAT"!?
AND DO YOU REALLY THINK...
WHAT'S THE POINT IN MY KILLING YOU!?

THE ONLY THING ...
...THAT'S CLEAR RIGHT NOW IS...
...IF YOU DON'T KILL ME, I'LL GO INSANE AND KILL ANYONE AND EVERYONE.
SO IF YOU WANT TO PROTECT ALL THOSE PEOPLE FROM MY MADNESS ...
...YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE THE DIRTY ROUTE, DON'T YOU SEE?
.....
DON'T LET IT TROUBLE YOU TOO MUCH.
KIYOTAKA'S ARRANGED EVERYTHING FOR THAT TO BE THE ONLY OUTCOME.
HA...
...IT'S ALMOST FUNNY.

I'VE BETRAYED EVERYTHING ...
...AND LOST EVERYTHING ...
...ALL BY MY OWN WILL, ONLY TO END UP HERE...
DAN (SLAM)
IN THE END, AM I NO MORE...
...THAN KIYOTAKA'S PUPPET, CONTROLLED BY HIS PASSING WHIMS...!!?
.....

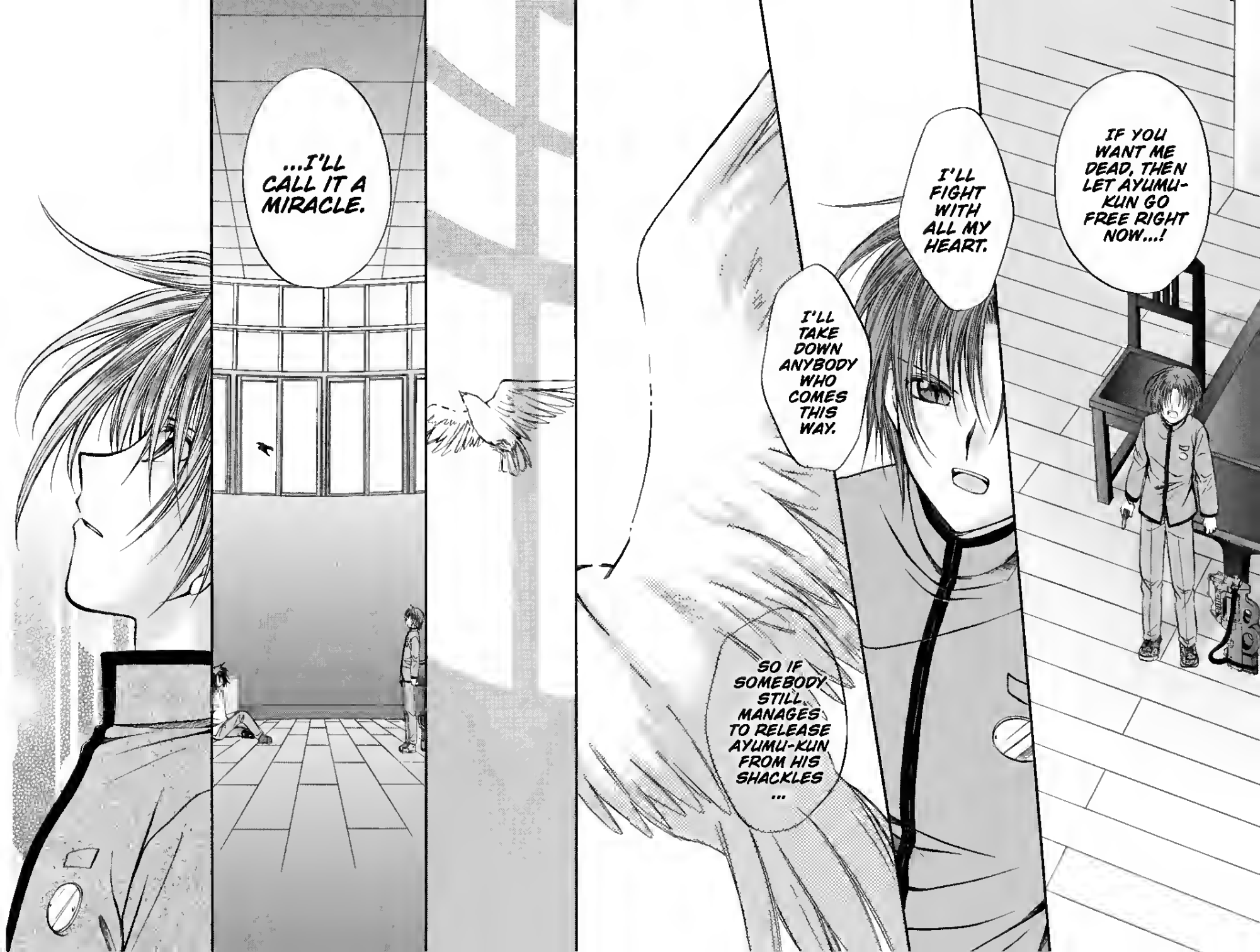
WHY THIS ...?
BROTHER... WHY WOULD YOU WANT A CRUEL ENDING LIKE THIS?

IF WE MESS THIS ONE UP...
EVERYONE KNOWS THE PLAN, RIGHT?
WE'LL LURE KANON-KUN OUT OF THE MUSIC ROOM...
...AND CORNER HIM IN THE TRAP ZONE.
...THERE'S NO SECOND CHANCE. GOT IT?
KOKU (NOD)
...
AYUMU-KUN.

I'VE TURNED MY BACK ON EVERY-ONE...
...AND LOST EVERY-THING TO GET THIS FAR...
I DON'T NEED SYMPATHY.
I HAVEN'T ...
...ADMITTED DEFEAT YET...
I CAN'T SURRENDER NOW.
HOW COULD I EVER ...?
GIRI (CLENCH)
...I STILL HAVE MY WILL.
EVEN IF KIYOTAKA IS A GOD...
...AND ALL THAT AWAITS ME IS MADNESS ...

...
REMEMBER WHAT I SAID.
AYUMU-KUN...
IF YOU GET FREE, I WON'T RESIST YOU KILLING ME.
...WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN ...!?
IT'S MY LAST SHOW OF WILL.
I'M GOING TO CONTINUE THIS CARNIVAL.
I'LL USE UP ALL MY STRENGTH TO KILL THE BLADE CHILDREN.
THERE'S NO WAY I'D LET MY PRECIOUS HOSTAGE GO FREE.
NO WAY I'D HELP YOU OUT.

UNTIL THE CARNIVAL'S OVER, YOU'RE GOING TO STAY LIKE THAT.
WHILE YOU'RE STILL BOUND, YOU CAN'T KILL ME.
HEH.
.....
AND BY THE TIME THE CARNIVAL'S FINISHED...
...I WON'T BE SANE ANYMORE.
SO EVEN IF YOU DO GET FREE, I WON'T SIT BACK AND LET MYSELF GET KILLED.
...KIYO-TAKA.


...I'LL CALL IT A MIRACLE.
IF YOU WANT ME DEAD, THEN LET AYUMU-KUN GO FREE RIGHT NOW...!
I'LL FIGHT WITH ALL MY HEART.
I'LL TAKE DOWN ANYBODY WHO COMES THIS WAY.
SO IF SOMEBODY STILL MANAGES TO RELEASE AYUMU-KUN FROM HIS SHACKLES ...

IF YOU WANT ME DEAD, THEN LET AYUMU-KUN GO FREE RIGHT NOW...!
I'LL FIGHT WITH ALL MY HEART.
I'LL TAKE DOWN ANYBODY WHO COMES THIS WAY.
SO IF SOMEBODY STILL MANAGES TO RELEASE AYUMU-KUN FROM HIS SHACKLES ...

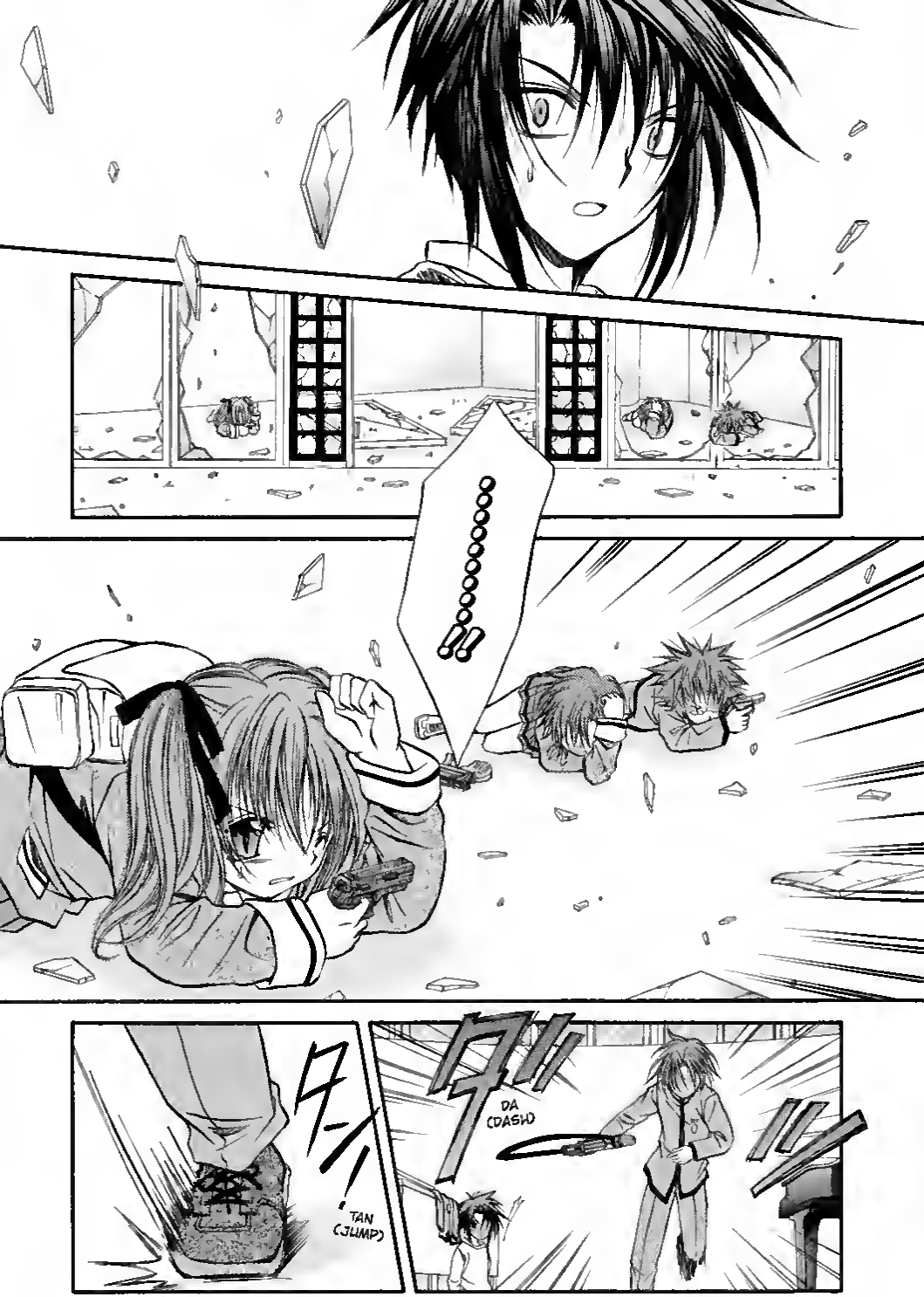
...I'LL CALL IT A MIRACLE.

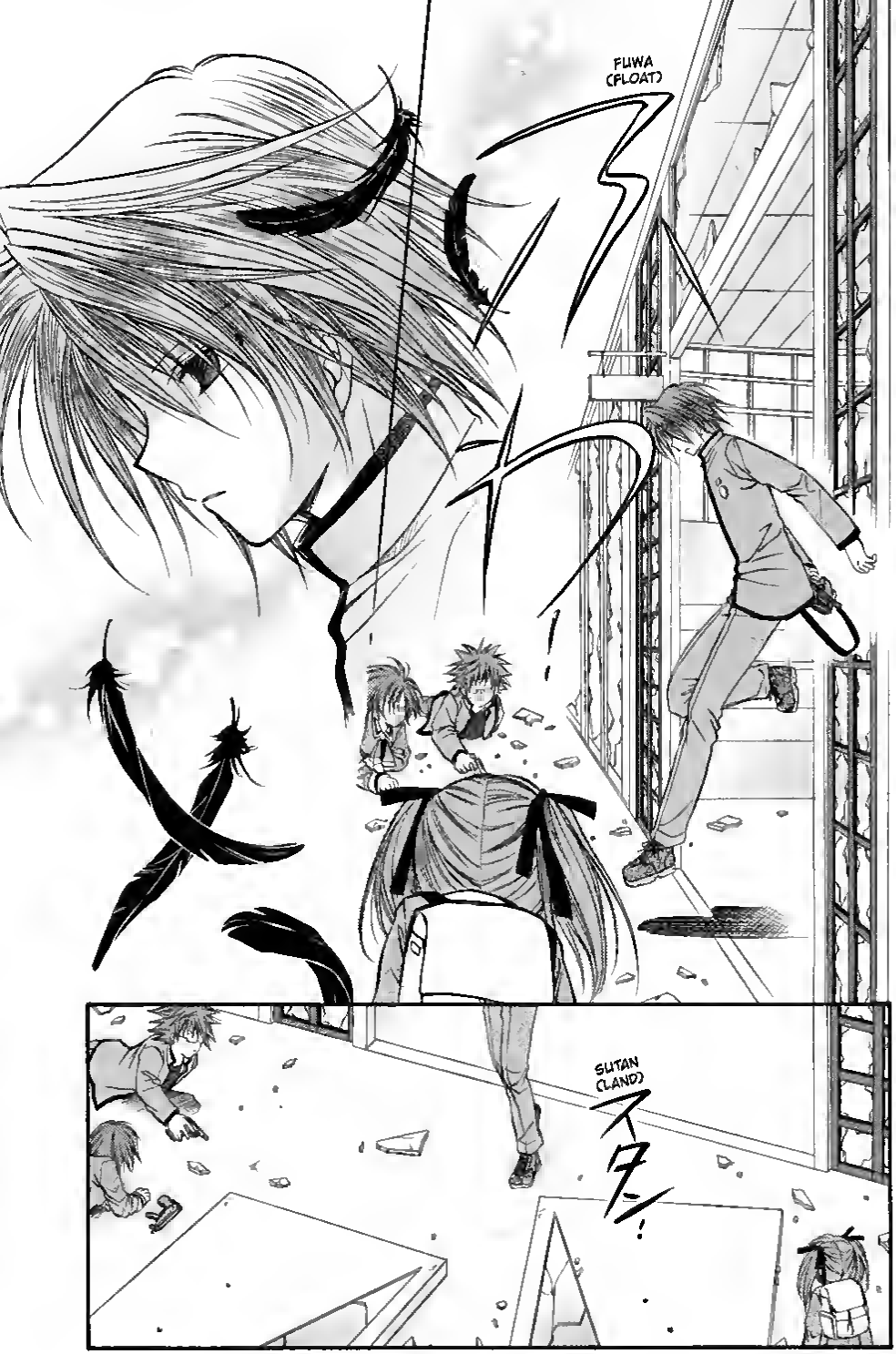
...IT'LL MEAN THIS IS ALL THE RIGHT THING...
ゴト：
GOTO (CLUNK)
...STILL, IF A MIRACLE LIKE THAT REALLY HAPPENS...
WHEN THAT MIRACLE HAPPENS, POINT THIS GUN AT ME.
I'LL LET YOU SHOOT ME TO DEATH.

YOU'RE JUST RUNNING AWAY FROM REALITY 'COS YOU'RE SCARED!
...QUIT IT WITH THE MIRACLE TALK...!
DON'T DEPEND ON OTHER PEOPLE AT THE END, WHEN IT REALLY COUNTS!
DECIDE FOR YOURSELF WHAT'S RIGHT!
DECIDE FOR MYSELF ...?
ALL I HAVE LEFT IS MY IRRATIONAL WILL.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO BELIEVE ANYMORE.
SU (CLIFT)
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO HOPE FOR.
WHAT CAN I POSSIBLY DECIDE WITH THAT?

...IT'S LIKE YOU SAID AT THE START...
.....
I'M TIRED.
SU (LIFT)
I SHOULD LET FATE OR WHATEVER IS OUT THERE...
...DECIDE MY DEATH FOR ME.

DA
(TAT)
DA
GU
(SQUEEZE)
DA
DA
DA
DA
DA
DA
BARIN
(SHATTER)


!!!!!!!!
タン!!
TAN (JUMP)
ダッ!!
DA (DASH)


FUWA
(FLOAT)
SUTAN
(LAND)

PLAY-TIME'S OVER.
I'M JUST LETTING MY BODY TAKE OVER NOW.
THIS IS ME GOING FULL THROTTLE.
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN STOP ME, GO AHEAD AND TRY.
SHIT!
HE'S ...

.....
HOLD IT...
...GOING TO KILL US!!

IT'S BEEN LESS THAN THIRTY SECONDS....
WHAT JUST HAPPENED!?
...AND HE ALREADY TOOK ALL THREE OF THEM DOWN!?
WHILE HE'S COMPLETELY UNHARMED!?
IS THIS THE SKILL I'VE HEARD ABOUT!?
ガチャ
GACHA (KACHAK)
SU (CLIFT)

...WHEN YOU GO ALL OUT ...
...YOU REALLY ARE UNBEATABLE ...
ZUI (RISE)
YORO (STAGGER)
ONLY BARELY.
THE HEMORRHAGING ALONE WILL FINISH THEM OFF.
BUT... THIS ISN'T OVER YET.
KOUSUKE-KUN AND RYOUKO-CHAN ARE STILL CLINGING TO LIFE, SEE?
CHA (CLICK)
NOW THEN...

!!
I'LL KILL YOU OFF CLEAN.
AND THEN IT'LL ALL BE OVER.
YOU GUYS ...
...AND MAYBE EVEN...
...ME.
UGH...
SO IT'S FINALLY COME TO THIS!!

PIN
(PING)
GU
(PRESS)
BA
(WHIP)
WHAT!?

SUPER INAZUMA KICK!!
DO CWHAM

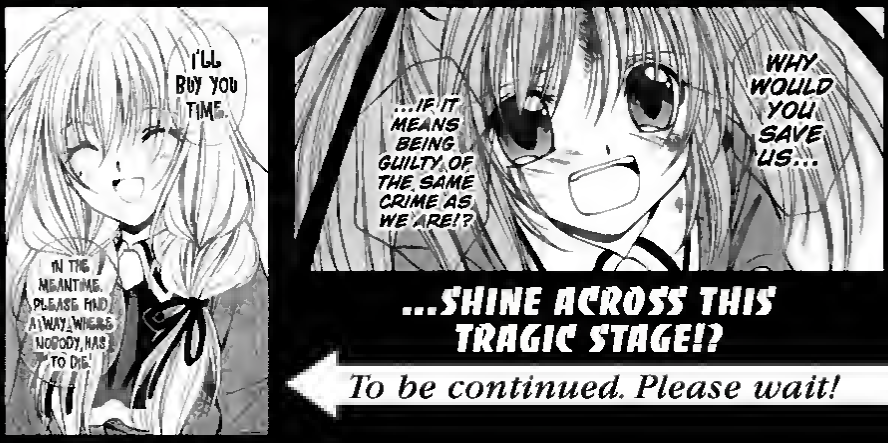
DO (THUD)
CHA (CLACK)
BA (WHIP)
DA (TAT)
DA
DA
DA
DA
DA
DA
DA
DA
SO THAT'S MADOKA NARUMI, EH!?

DON'T YOU THINK YOUR PRANKS HAVE GONE FAR ENOUGH?
...KANON-KUN, WAS IT...?
NI (SMIRK)
I DON'T NEED AYUMU'S HELP.
BIG SIS HERE IS GOING TO GIVE YOU THE PUNISHMENT YOU DESERVE.
Spiral 8 THE END
BONDS OF REASONING

THE PULSATING OF THE SPIRAL TELLS OF THE APPROACHING CRUX OF FATE...

AYUMU'S POTENTIAL TO EXCEED HIS BROTHER KIYOTAKA THAT WAS HIDDEN INSIDE HIM...

TSUKIOMI HIGH TURNS INTO A BATTLEGROUND... CAN THE LIGHT THAT TURNS NIGHTMARES INTO HOPE...


I'LL BUY YOU TIME.
IN THE MEANTIME, PLEASE FIND A WAY WHERE NOBODY HAS TO DIE.
...IF IT MEANS BEING GUILTY OF THE SAME CRIME AS WE ARE!?
WHY WOULD YOU SAVE US...

...SHINE ACROSS THIS TRAGIC STAGE!?

To be continued. Please wait!

SPIRAL WORK DIARY

IN COMMEMORATION OF OUR THIRD YEAR OF SERIALIZATION, A CHARACTER POPULARITY CONTEST WAS HELD IN GANGAN MAGAZINE. SINCE I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO DRAW NEW CHARACTER IMAGES FOR IT BACK THEN, I'M TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO NOW. PLEASE ENJOY.

8TH PLACE: KIYOTAKA NARUMI

FOR BEING A CHARACTER WE'VE NEVER FULLY SEEN, IT'S PRETTY AMAZING THAT HE GOT 8TH PLACE.

SINCE WHEN WAS HE INCLUDED!?

11TH PLACE: SUN-SENSEI

5TH PLACE: KANON HILBERT

PEOPLE SEEM SPLIT OVER WHETHER THEY LIKE HIM OR HATE HIM, BUT I WONDER IF THAT'S REALLY THE CASE. DOES 5TH PLACE FEEL APPROPRIATE FOR HIM?

3RD PLACE: AYUMU NARUMI

I WAS A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT WHERE OUR PROTAGONIST WOULD PLACE, BUT I'M (AHEM) SATISFIED WITH 3RD.

1ST PLACE: EYES RUTHERFORD

I WAS CERTAINLY CAUGHT OFF-GUARD WITH THIS ONE, ESPECIALLY SINCE HE HAD RARELY APPEARED WHEN THE CALL-OUT FOR THE CONTEST WAS FIRST MADE. MAYBE IT'S HIS GOOD LOOKS? (LAUGH)

12TH PLACE:
IMAZATO-SENSEI
13TH PLACE:
SUEMARU WATAYA
& MIZUE NOHARA
9TH PLACE:
MADOKA NARUMI &
SAYOKO SHIRANAGATANI
I'M NOT SURPRISED
ABOUT MADOKA BEING
HERE, BUT FOR SAYA-CHAN
TO MAKE IT HERE...
6TH PLACE:
KOUSUKE ASAZUKI
EVEN THOUGH PEOPLE ARE
ALWAYS TELLING ME HOW MUCH
THEY LIKE HIM, HE DIDN'T
RANK VERY HIGH. THAT'S
JUST HOW HE IS, I GUESS
7TH PLACE:
RYOUKO TAKAMACHI
MAYBE THIS IS THE
READERS' WAY OF SAYING
THEY WANT HER TO TAKE
A MORE ACTIVE ROLE?
4TH PLACE:
HIYONO YUIZAKI
PERSONALLY,
I THOUGHT SHE'D
MAKE 1ST PLACE...
2ND PLACE:
RIO TAKEUCHI
I GUESS YOU COULD
SAY I PREDICTED THIS.
WHAT'S NEAT ABOUT
HER IS THAT SHE'S
NOT JUST THE CUTE-
GIRL CHARACTER.

AFTERWORD

Hello, all you readers. This is Kyo Shirodaira. It's Volume 8. Soon we'll be entering the double-digits. In this volume, our protagonist did almost absolutely nothing, but I believe that in the next volume I'll have him act a lot more like a real protagonist. I swear, when he becomes inactive, logic loses against violence and it just ends. Indeed, how could I have let violence win like that...?

Having reached Volume 8, it's gotten harder for me to decide what to write about on these pages, so this time I've decided to fill them by introducing a favorite author of mine.

I'd like to introduce the American picture book author Edward Gorey. For many years, he's received high acclaim in other countries and has given rise to an especially cult-like fanbase. Meanwhile, in Japan, his works have been picked up and translated by Kawade Shobo, so his popularity is growing here as well.

In the picture book corner at most major bookstores, his works would probably be on display face up and be categorized as "mature" picture books. Be warned that some of his works would give a young child nightmares and leave him somewhat scarred for life if he were to make the mistake of picking one up (especially "The Hapless Child").

I first became familiar with this authors' works eight years ago when I read his story "The ABCs of Dead Children," featured in *Hayakawa Mystery Magazine*. (I should have known from the title alone that I was in for a disturbing ride.) It hit me hard and left a deep impression. I was dumbfounded that there could be people in this world who had a sense for things I had never even imagined (for the record, that series of his has been compiled into a book titled *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*).

Back when I read that story, I hadn't been formally introduced to it, and I never came across any other Gorey works, but about two years ago in the picture book corner, I spotted the cover of a book titled *The Gashlycrumb Tinies* and was shocked, thinking to myself, "How could such a dangerous piece be sitting right out in broad daylight in the picture book corner meant for kids!?"

Other works like *The Doubtful Guest* and *The Glorious Nosebleed* are stories I've read only once but whose content has never left my mind. For those of you with an affinity for the gruesome from time to time, and who possess strong constitutions, take a stroll through the picture book corner and pick up one of his books sometime. But remember, if you get nightmares from it, don't blame me.

I should also mention that after reading Gorey, I read Youko Sano-sensei's *The Cat That Lived a Million Times*, and it balanced out the state of my heart wonderfully.

Last comes an apology. Usually, I write the side-story novel on the GAN GAN NET page in time for the release of the comic, but this round I took a break. My sincerest apologies.

I didn't have time, the part of my brain that devises mysteries died, and other such circumstances arose, but this side-story series will soon be wrapping up, so it's my belief that I should take all the preparatory time I need for that.

And with that, I'm going to try to get back on track with that as soon as I can. But for now, I'm sorry.

Well, I'll be praying to see you all again in Volume 9!

坂平京

KYO SHIRODAIRA

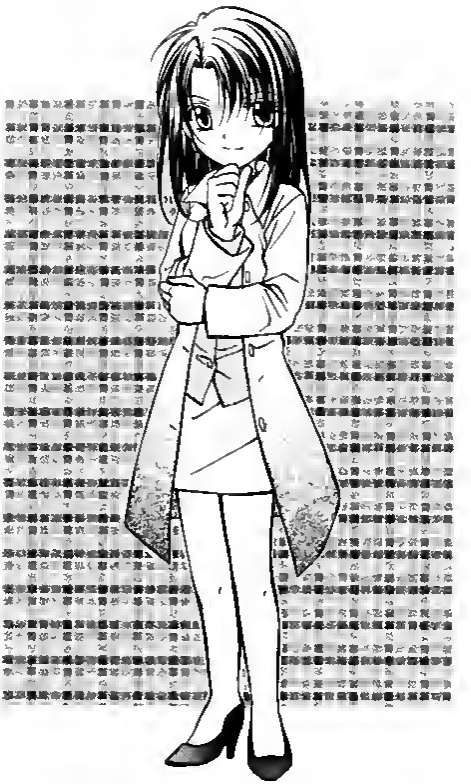
Spiral

THE BONDS OF REASONING 8

Omake!

CONCEPTUALIZATION
WHEN HE UNZIPS HIS JACKET, IT MUST BE LINED WITH WEAPONS.
OR MAYBE SOME KIND OF FOURTH DIMENSION OPENS UP UNDER THERE.
AS IF!
3
?
?
I'VE DEDUCED THAT KANON-SAN CARRIES SEVERAL CONCEALED WEAPONS ON HIS PERSON AT ALL TIMES...
1
4
WHAT IF HIS ABDOMEN HAS A GUN-SHAPED CUBBY-HOLE TO HIDE ONE IN!?
MAYBE THIS REALLY IS WORTH INVESTI-GATING!
2
...BUT HOW DOES HE PULL THAT OFF IN HIS SCHOOL UNIFORM?

TRANSLATION NOTES



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Super Inazuma Kiiick!! is the signature attack from *Super Robot Wars Alpha 3*'s Gunbuster.

SPIRAL
The Bonds of Reasoning ⑧

Kyo Shirodaira
Eita Mizuno

Translation: Christine Schilling

Lettering: Alexis Eckerman

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Yen Press
Hachette Book Group
237 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017

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First Yen Press ebook Edition: April 2014

ebook ISBN: 978-0-316-24171-7

App ISBN: 978-0-316-24172-4